



The Old Ironsides Report



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Operation Iraqi Freedom 'a family affair' for some soldiers

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BAGHDAD, Iraq—It's a natural thing to miss your family. The first time we leave home, whether we admit it or not, we do miss the comfort and security offered by being with our families. That's part of human nature.

However, the feelings seem to be amplified during a deployment. Maybe it's being on the other side of the world. Maybe it's the lack of quick communication with family members.

Some soldiers have an advantage, though.

Sgts. Caleb, Bill and Nick Johnson all serve as combat engineers with 1st Armored Division's Company A, 1457th Engineer Battalion out of Utah. They share the bond of brotherhood, which makes a deployment more bearable, they say.

"Overall, it's a lot easier," says Caleb Johnson, at 28, the oldest of the brothers. "You're not missing your family as much, because some of them are here with you."

Bill Johnson, 27, joined the Army first, but transferred to his brothers' unit just before being deployed to Iraq.

"We're like brothers *and* teammates," he said. "A lot of people are worrying about their families back home, but we've got part of ours here, so we can look after them."

Nick Johnson, the youngest of the trio at 24, offered perhaps the most accurate observation: "It's a lot of stress on our mom."

Nick joined the Army a year after Bill. Caleb followed suit a month later.

Now the three find themselves in Baghdad—thousands of miles from anything familiar—but they're not going at it alone. After transferring to the 1457th ECB and finding out they'd be deployed, Bill said, "We knew we had an advantage not many others had."

The brothers Johnson are all married and their wives spend lots of time with each other back home, they said.

"We get a lot more info from back home since everyone knows everyone else's business," Nick said with a laugh.

Not only family members deploy together. Sometimes, soldiers have the good fortune of deploying with their spouse.



Sgts. Nick, Bill, and Caleb Johnson relax on their patio outside of their tent at the 1457th Engineer Combat Battalion Life Support Area on Baghdad International Airport. All three of the brothers are combat engineers serving in the same Utah National Guard unit currently deployed to Baghdad.

Cpl. Michele Masso, a medic with 501st Military Police Company, is deployed to Iraq with her husband Cpl. Miguel Masso, an MP in the same company.

They married a little over a year ago, but she's hardly seen him since then, said Michele.

Miguel was deployed on a training mission for several months before coming to Iraq, and now, even though they're right next to each other, they rarely seem to cross paths because of their different schedules.

"There are times we don't get to see each other, even at work," she said,

Because of the unit's policies on improper association during deployment, the couple is unable even to hold hands, or kiss each other goodnight.

Michele also said that being in a war zone with one's husband can make for some sleepless nights.

"In some aspects it's harder, because you're constantly worried about that person," she said.

The two are looking forward to their upcoming permanent change of station to U.S. Army Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., where Miguel will continue his job as an MP, and Michele will work in the hospital.

As for the Johnsons, none of the three know what the future holds when they get back to Utah, but Bill said one thing is certain: "This has been an experience few others enjoy."

NEWS

Rice Says Iraq Never Disarmed

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Bush, facing growing doubts about his handling of postwar Iraq, launched a new public relations campaign to convince Americans his course is the correct one. His national security adviser insisted Wednesday that Saddam Hussein harbored ambitions to use unconventional weapons - even though none has been found. Condoleezza Rice told a foreign policy forum in Chicago that the team led by chief U.S. weapons hunter David Kay "is finding proof that Iraq never disarmed and never complied with U.N. inspectors."

Israel Adds Troops to Palestinian Areas

JERUSALEM (AP) - Trying to prevent another terror attack during the Jewish holidays, Israel enforced an open-ended lockdown of Palestinian towns Wednesday and ordered two more battalions into the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The lockdown was extended as questions arose over the health of Yasser Arafat after he appeared in public looking haggard and disoriented. Advisers denied a report he has suffered a mild heart attack, saying Arafat is weak from a stomach flu.

Report: Chinese to Orbit Earth on Oct. 15

BEIJING (AP) - After 11 years of planning, China's first manned space flight could come down to this: one man, a two-pound sack of seeds and a single 90-minute loop around the planet. Giving the firmest signs yet that China is about to blast a "taikonaut" into orbit, news reports Wednesday said it would take place Oct. 15 and be shown live on television.

Vietnam, U.S. Agree to Resume Flights

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) - Vietnam and the United States tentatively agreed on Wednesday to allow the first commercial flights between the two countries since the end of the Vietnam War. The two sides were still working out the final details, but were expected to initial an agreement Thursday.

SAFETY TIP:

Due to the Daylight Savings Time change, it now becomes dark earlier. Soldiers must ensure their visibility when walking. To prevent incidents during darkness soldiers must:

- Wear Reflective Vest or Belts
- Know Where You are Walking/Running
- Vehicles Must Reduce Speeds When Passing Pedestrians
- Carry and Use Flashlight
- DO NOT WEAR HEADPHONES

ENTERTAINMENT

Stones deal upsets US stores

(BBC) The Rolling Stones have angered US record stores by selling their new DVD exclusively through a major electronics chain for four months.

Their Four Flicks DVD will go on sale at Best Buy from 11 November throughout the lucrative holiday season.

The Almighty Institute of Music Retail, which helps record labels work with music stores, condemned the deal as "short-sighted".

The Stones' management was not immediately available for comment.

The four-DVD set will go on sale for \$30 (about £18).

Record retailers accuse non-specialist chains such as Best Buy of selling music at loss-leading prices without regard for their survival.

The music industry is already reeling from plunging sales as a result of internet piracy. More than 1,100 record stores have closed in the US in 2003, according to the institute.

Major chains such as Best Buy and Target control about 55% of US music sales.

Music sales during the first half of 2003 fell 11.7% to \$5.1bn (£3.07bn) compared with same period in 2002.

Increasingly, they are entering into exclusive deals with top bands such as U2 and the Eagles, although the exclusive sales windows for those acts lasted weeks rather than months.

Clark Benson, chief executive officer of Almighty Institute of Music Retail, said such deals hit traditional retailers and the music industry as a whole.

"The more that a mass merchant like Best Buy ends up having an exclusive, the more it hurts these record stores," he said. "Those stores are the ones where people are really getting turned onto new stuff, not the mass merchants."

Some retailers have threatened to mark up the price of the Stones' back catalogue CDs by a few dollars in retaliation.

A spokeswoman for the Rolling Stones said the members and their advisors were traveling and unavailable for comment.

Chaplain's Thought for the Day:

Cut Off

You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried out to You. —Psalm 31:22

During Antarctica's 9-month winter, the continent is engulfed in darkness and the temperature sinks to -115 °F (-82 °C). Flights are halted from late February to November, leaving workers at scattered research stations isolated and virtually cut off from outside help. Yet, during 2001, two daring rescue missions penetrated the polar winter and airlifted people with serious medical conditions to safety.

We all feel helpless and cut off at times. It may seem that not even God can hear or answer our cries for help. The psalmist David said in a time of trouble, "I am cut off from before Your eyes" (Psalm 31:22). But David discovered that the Lord had not forgotten him, and he rejoiced, "You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried out to You" (v.22).

God pierces the dark winter of our world through His redeeming love. He reaches us and calms our fears in the most desperate circumstances. We are never cut off from the mighty power and sustaining peace of God.

God's help is only a prayer away.